AIR-BUBBLES

*64.   **SHRI SRIDHAR KOTAGIRI**
                SHRIMATI CHINTA ANURADHA

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION
नागर विमानन मंत्री

be pleased to state:-

(a) whether the Government has taken steps to establish exclusive air-links or Air-Bubbles with other countries with the objective of restarting international passenger services and if so, the details thereof;

b) whether there are any regions where flight connectivity is still not possible due to the COVID conditions and if so, the details thereof;

c) whether the Government is aware of the cases of increasing COVID-19 outbreaks in UK and European Countries; and

d) if so, the steps taken by Government to prevent the further spreading of the pandemic through the aviation sector?

ANSWER

Minister of CIVIL AVIATION
नागर विमानन मंत्री

(Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia)

(a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

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Statement referred to in the reply to parts (a) to (d) of the Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 64 regarding "Air Bubbles" to be answered on 02.12.2021

(a) and (b) During Covid-19 pandemic when scheduled commercial international passenger services were restricted, the Government facilitated the international travel of passengers in a restricted manner through the air travel bubble arrangements. As on 29.11.2021 air travel bubble arrangements have been formalized with 31 countries. These air travel bubble arrangements provide direct/indirect connectivity to more than 100 countries around the world.

The Government formalizes new air travel bubble arrangements after taking into consideration the Covid-19 situation, the market demand and assessment of risk factor with the concerned country after taking concurrence of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). However, there are countries which have not yet formalized air travel bubble arrangements with India.

Recognizing the increased vaccination coverage across the globe and the changing nature of the pandemic and considering the health protocols which have been put in place for international arrivals, the Government decided to resume scheduled commercial international passenger services to/from India w.e.f. 15.12.2021 with capacity restrictions on the countries declared 'at risk' by MoHFW.

However, in view of the evolving global scenario with the emergence of new variants of concern, the situation is being closely monitored and reviewed in consultation with other Ministries, with regard to taking any further decision on this issue.

(c) and (d) The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued guidelines for international arrivals on 28.11.2021 which refers to a list of countries 'at-risk'. This list of countries is available on their website (mohfw.gov.in) and includes UK and European countries. The guidelines for travellers from countries 'at- risk' includes, inter alia, as under:
i) Submission of sample for post-arrival COVID-19 test at the point of arrival. Such travellers will be required to wait for their test results at the arrival airport before leaving or taking a connecting flight
ii) If tested negative they will follow, home quarantine for 7 days, re-test on the 8th day of arrival in India and if negative, further self-monitor of their health for next 7 days
iii) If such travellers are tested positive, their samples should be sent for genomic testing at INSACOG laboratory network They shall be managed at separate isolation facility and treated as per laid down standard protocol including contact tracing The contacts of such positive case should be kept under institutional quarantine or at home quarantine and monitored strictly by the concerned State Government as per laid down protocol.

Travellers from countries excluding those enlisted by MoHFW as countries 'at-risk', will be allowed to leave the airport and shall self-monitor their health for 14 days post arrival. A sub-section (5% of the total flight passengers) shall undergo post-arrival testing at random at the airport on arrival. If found positive, they shall be managed as per laid down standard protocol and samples would further send for genomic testing.

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